

HACKNEY UNION NEWS

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MARION WINS FIGHT TO STAY IN UK

by Midge Purcell

Marion Gaima, a NALGO member threatened with deportation to her native Sierra Leone has won a 5 year battle to remain in the UK.

March 28th, the Home Office announced the decision to revoke a long standing deportation order. Home Affairs Minister, Timothy Renton said his decision to revoke the order was influenced by Ms. Gaima's 15 years of residence in the UK, her active role in the church and community, plus a recent ruling by the Court of Appeal in her favour.

Favourable Appeal

The Court of Appeal ruled last December that the Home Office had made procedural errors in the processing of Ms. Gaima's application for political asylum, and that her claim had not been fairly considered.

Ms. Gaima's application for refugee status was based on her fear of persecution if she returned to Sierra Leone where her father was a minister in the previous government and a leading member of the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party.

Ms. Gaima's campaign against deportation has had wide support. Her union NALGO played a leading role in the campaign, as did diverse sections of the



religious community. Over 30,000 signatures were handed into the Home Office on a petition in support of Ms. Gaima.

The Home Affairs Minister also recieved numerous letters from around the country, including personal queries about the case from MPs Tony Banks, Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Teddy Taylor, Janet Fookes, Harry Barnes, Harry Cohen and Diane Abbott.

Commenting on the decision, Ms Gaima said, "For five years I have lived with the fear of being seperated from my family, friends, home and job. It was an incredible ordeal and I'm glad the nightmare is finally over.

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Construction Safety Campaign Is Launched In Hackney

by Mark Metcalf

The increasing numbers of injuries and deaths on building sites was highlighted at a recent public meeting in Hackney Town Hall.

Entitled 'Stop Murder at Work' it was jointly organised by members of the Construction Safety Campaign (CSC), the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) and workers from the support unit.

Speakers at the meeting included the CSC, IBRG, AEU organiser Derek Wheaton and

Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington.

160 Workers Killed

The audience was informed that 160 workers were killed in the construction industry in 1988 and it was noted that young Irish workers were in particular danger. It was horrifying to discover that 13 of those killed remain unidentified. Most of these workers are thought to be Irish.

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Local Response to NHS White Paper:

"HANDS OFF OUR HEALTH SERVICE"

by John Lang

Criticisms of the Government's plans for the NHS have been growing as the effects of the White Paper, called **Working for Patients**, become more apparent.

The Trade Unions have been joined in their opposition to the White Paper by GPs and influential health organisations including the British Medical Association.

All have expressed their fears that if competition and market forces are allowed to become integral parts of the NHS, then profits will take priority over patients.

The Government's proposals include the creation of a hospital trust to encourage hospitals to "opt out" and become self governing.

These hospitals will be run by non-elected directors and will gather most of their revenue from contracts made with health authorities for providing services to their patients.

Unions Squeezed Out

To ensure that the Trade Unions have little or no influence, these hospitals will employ their own staff and set their own rates of pay.

In a further attempt to weaken the Labour movements involvement with the NHS, traditional Local Authority representation on the Regional and District Health Authorities will no longer be permitted.

GPs will be given a budget and will be expected to buy treatment for their

patients from hospitals and clinics. This will openly discourage GPs from taking on long term and chronically ill patients, who would be a drain on their budget.

The health service in Hackney has been cut drastically over the last few years. The 'dream' hospital, The Homerton, has failed to fill the gap left by the closure of several other hospitals including St. Leonard's and St. Matthew's.

Current plans for Phase 2 of the Homerton are a shell of what they were originally supposed to be and community care plans in Hackney are at crisis point.

The effect of the White Paper will be to further limit the access of Hackney People to decent health care and further assaults on the pay and conditions of Hackney's health workers.

Local Campaign

Hackney Health Emergency, a local campaign set up to defend the NHS in Hackney, has launched a local campaign "Hands off our Health Service". This campaign against the White Paper will include public meetings, lobbys, supplying speakers for local meetings and producing regular up to date information.

If you would like to get involved in this campaign, contact Mike Bold, 24a Stoke Newington High St. N16 or phone 249-1917 (24 hour ansaphone) or Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, 249-8086.



HGV Drivers Campaign for Better Facilities Takes Off

by George Sherman, TGWU

Trades Council delegate and HGV long distance driver George Sherman has become centrally involved in starting a campaign to improve welfare facilities for HGV drivers. In this short article he explains why such a campaign is necessary as well as the work carried out so far.

Over the years the Transport & General Workers Union have tried to improve the parking facilities for Heavy Goods Vehicles(HGV) drivers.



George Sherman gets petitions signed

However these efforts have had little success and in recent years there has been a drastic reduction in facilities; including, for example, the closure of sites with parking and overnight accommodation, plus the barring of drivers from many service stations.

In addition, we also have the problems of weight limits and hours of transit restrictions throughout the country. This has left many HGV drivers angry, frustrated and believing they are being treated as second class citizens.

Belfast Road Training Centre Slated for May Closure

by Keith Veness, NUPE Hackney Branch

One of the most serious issues faced by trades unions, both locally and nationally, has been the destruction of good quality training and its replacement by the sort of 'cheap labour' schemes now typified by the wretched "ET".

It was therefore with incredulity the local trades unionists heard that Hackney Council had suddenly taken the decision to close the Belfast Road Training Centre in Stoke Newington with only one months notice.

The Centre provides high quality training for young workers in carpentry, metalwork, clothing trades, office skills and cooking/catering. It is a 100% organised NUPE

workplace and addresses itself to the sort of skills useful in the local economy.

The Council proposes to merge some of the training resources with I.T.E.C., which concentrates on new technology and office skills. However, this will not provide any training for manual trades and cannot give the depth of training for many local youth.

NUPE

For example, the clothing trades course is the only one of its kind in Hackney. It provides courses for young Asian women who otherwise would get no real training and simply end up

in sweatshops and dead-end jobs.

The local NUPE branches have pledged to support the workers at the Centre and the staff have vowed to fight the closure.

You can help to win this battle by passing resolutions deploring the closure and calling on the Council to keep the Centre open. Contact your local Councillor and demand they keep the place open. Send copies to us at NUPE of any letters, resolutions, etc.

We believe good quality training can be saved at Belfast Road if the local trades union movement acts quickly.

For further information, contact us on: 985 9104 or 986 3123 ext 3519. NUPE needs your support to win this battle, and every local trades unionist need to see good training stays in Hackney.

Migrant Workers On

by Simon Lynn

On Monday, February 27, 38 Kurdish and Turkish workers were arrested in raids on factories in Hackney. By the next day, seven had been deported and a further fourteen were under threat. This action came in the wake of a wave of raids across North and East London.

The TGWU clothing branch, community and political groups organised immediate protest action: a mass picket of Dalston police station on March 4, a 3000 strong march the next day and an International Women's Day march through Hackney under the slogans 'No worker is illegal', 'Right to settle, right to work', 'No more deportations' and 'No to police raids'.



Intensifying Racism

The fierce attacks by the police and Immigration authorities take place both in the context of the intensifying racism of the British state, and against a background of a struggle by migrant workers against employers in the factories themselves.

The 1988 Immigration Act made 'overstaying' a criminal offence. The implications of this were heralded in last November's announcement by the Home Office that it was to double the number of officers investigating 'overstayers' and migrants, with the aim of resolving 26,000 cases - that is deporting 26,000 people.

In the run-up to 1992 the European governments are planning to ensure migrant

workers and black people in general do not have equal rights to freedom of travel and citizenship within Europe.



Migrant workers already face severe restrictions and harassment under a comprehensive system of internal controls. This is likely to include a compulsory identity card for migrant workers as already instituted in some other countries.

The government already holds an extensive base of information on black people here, and an undefeated Poll Tax would complete the structural base to enable an identity card system to be implemented.

Social Cost

Under this government, there has been a steady move to relinquish responsibility for the social cost of migrant labour.

The 1985 definition of 'recourse to public funds' and the 1988 Social Security Act are two among a tightening net of rules and regulations that discriminate against black and migrant workers in access to health, housing, benefits, education and so on.

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T&G Link-Up Campaign Sets Up Clothing Branch

by Val Veness

Recent month have seen a lot of activity in the largest sector of private industry in Hackney - the clothing and garment trades. As part of its national "link-up" recruitment campaign the Transport and General Workers (TGWU) has launched a new branch for clothing workers - the 1/1312.

Fishing Raids

One of the perceived difficulties of organising was that many workers did not speak English and were often threatened with police "fishing raids" and deportation.

However, this has also had the advantage of enabling a variety of local community organisations to be involved in recruiting and translation work. Currently the branch membership stands at nearly 500.

The majority of the branch officers are Turkish or Kurdish, and the union organisers have paid tribute to the excellent support recieved from local Turkish and Kurdish groups.

The branch has meets regularly at the week-end to plan future activites and recruitment campaigns. It has also voted to affiliate to various local bodies, including the Trades Council.

LINK-UP T&G

Another new initiative has been to start a training course for branch officers and shop stewards which covers employment rights, what the union can do for them, health and safety and collective bargaining.

At the same time, the public agency links to the Home Office, along side direct harassment by police and Immigration officials, create fear and uncertainty.

The factory bosses have used this backround to intensify exploitation. They have been met by increasing struggles over the right to organise in trade unions, and over wages and conditions.

These struggles have led to the formation of the North and East London TGWU textile branch 'No. 1/1312. The branch will require committed support from the TGWU against the attacks it will face, including trade unionists being shopped to immigration authorities by employers, and in the battles that lie ahead over recognition.



URGENT HELP 368 KURDISH REFUGEES

Kurdish refugees have arrived in Hackney in East London since May 2nd 1989. They are fleeing from the War zone in South East Turkey and from persecution by the Turkish Government and its armed forces. Over 4,000 Kurds have been killed in the last year and Amnesty International estimates that in the last 8 years alone 250,000 have been tortured.

Since 2 May the Kurdish Workers Association & the Halkevi Community Centre have battled against the odds to feed & accommodate all these workers, some with families & children. However much more help is needed.

A KURDISH REFUGEES SUPPORT GROUP was set up on 5 May by concerned local organizations. We intend to raise support from as many community groups, political parties, trade unions, churches & individuals as we can.

We appeal on behalf of the Kurdish refugees, who are fleeing from persecution by the Turkish government, for the following:

- * Money (cheques payable to the H.A.D.C. No 3 Account.
- * Heaters
- * Food, cutlery, kitchen utensils & portable cooking equipment
- * Bedding (Blankets, mattresses, pillows)
- * Toiletries (including Towels)
- * Clothing
- * Accommodation
- * Volunteers
- * Access to Bathrooms
- * Games/toys (chess, draughts, backgammon) & TV sets

Offer your services to:

Kurdish Workers Association
531a Kingsland Road
London E8
254 0442 or 254 7558

Halkevi Community Centre
92-100 Stoke Newington Road
London N16
249 6980

Kurdish Cultural Centre
13 Stockwell Road
London SW9
274 6251

Contact the Kurdish Refugees Support Group at 489 Kingsland Rd, London E8, phone 249 6930 to find out how you can help in mobilising support.

The next meeting of the Kurdish Refugees Support Group will take place on Wednesday 10 May at 6pm at Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Rd., E8.

Kurdish Refugee Support Group 8th May 1989.

T & G Activist Sacked by Fords Dagenham

by M. Metcalf

Hackney resident Mick Gosling, Chair of the Transport and General Workers 1/1107 branch at Fords Dagenham, was sacked shortly before Christmas.

Management claimed that he was dismissed for disciplinary offences, although he had no previous disciplinary record against him.

The managements case was destroyed in the subsequent appeal hearings. The most serious charge was that Mick, on November 11th, had been absent from his job when he chaired a branch meeting on Ireland with Bernadette McAllinsky.

Fords UK clearly hoped to undercut Mick's support by exploiting the anti-Irish hysteria which has been created by the present Government's censoring of debate on Ireland.

On the job

Fords and the papers ignored the 20 witnesses who confirmed that Mick was on his job either side of lunchtime. Fords then claimed that he sanctioned an unconstitutional stoppage on November 15th at 8am when 40 workers walked out. Company records showed he was in the Medical room from 8 till 8.30am.

Perhaps the most ridiculous charge was that Mick was responsible for line 3 walking out on July 1st 1988. He was not at work on this day!

Fords were determined to justify sacking Mick Gosling and resorted to claims that he had not registered his degree on his application form sent in ten years ago.

Despite disproving all Fords allegations the company turned down Mick Gosling's appeal in early February. It then sought to frustrate all attempts to ballot the workers for strike action, and after failing it resorted to individually mailing each Ford worker a four page document repeating all their originally disproved allegations.

Fearing for their jobs Ford workers voted 37% to strike

and 63% against. Mick Gosling lost his job and Fords have now sacked another Union activist at the plant, with clearly more to come.

Fords are determined to wreck union organisation at Dagenham and stop any opposition to their plans to transfer Sierra production to Belgium.

This will leave Dagenham as a one car plant with very little future.

Construction Safety Campaign

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In addition to workers killed at work there is also an ever increasing number killed by a long-term industrial disease. These include people like Alan Powell who, at only 33, died of pericardial mesothelioma or in ordinary language; exposure to asbestos.

These and other problems were the reasons behind the formation of the CSC by rank and file building workers.

The campaign recently held its first annual conference and the 90 workplace delegates who attended re-affirmed their intention to keep highlighting the serious dangers which exist on most of London's private sector building sites.

It is hardly surprising that dangers have increased when one considers that the average fine in 1987 for a firm found to have caused a workers death was .474. The campaign is seeking much higher fines and for the imprisonment of employers found to have caused a workers death.

The campaign is also demanding that no workers should be sacked for raising the issue of health and safety on a site.



KEEP DEATH OFF
BUILDING SITES

The illegal blacklist operated by many of the larger firms has reduced Union organisation to a minimum on many sites and the campaign is pushing Construction Unions to support victimised workers and pursue recruitment campaigns.

The Construction Safety Campaign Secretary is Tony O'Brien. Contact him at 72 Copeland Road, London SE16 0L1 or phone 732-3711. In Hackney you could contact Mick Holder from the Direct Labour Organisation. Telephone Mick on 986-0017 after 1pm.

MAY DAY

Historic Day for Workers Worldwide

by Joe Berry

May Day for over a century has been celebrated by workers throughout the world as international labour day, for solidarity with all in struggle against exploitation and oppression, for peace, democracy and social progress.



It has its origins in the 1886 upsurge of American workers' mass actions for eight-hour working day, and their May Day nationwide strike which involved 380,000 workers from over 11,000 factories.

Police Clashes

On May 4th, infuriated workers clashed with police all over the city, and a demonstration was called that evening in Haymarket Square to protest against brutality by the police and the Pinkerton scab organisation.

At the meeting some 3000 people listened to speeches until 10pm when rain came down in torrents, and many left. Police then moved into the square.

A bomb was exploded by a provocateur, and the blast hit the police, killing one and wounding five. Enraged, the police indiscriminately clubbed and fired at those trying to escape. Six workers were killed and 200 wounded.

The city was swept by mass round-ups and searches. hundreds were arrested. Seven were detained, and after a 16 months court hearing, four were hanged and three were jailed. It was never discovered who threw the bomb.

In June 1893 the Governor of Illinois granted amnesty to the three in jail and acknowledged that the executed martyrs were not guilty, but victims of an unjust trial.

The world was shocked at these events, which had a tremendous impact on the international working class movement.

In July 1889, the International Socialist Congress, which took place in Paris, resolved that "a great manifestation..in all countries and all towns, on the same agreed day..." would be held to demand reduction of the working day by law to eight hours. It chose May 1st to coincide with the date set by the American Federation of Labour.

Thus, the historic May Day was born. In 1890, it was marked as international labour day in a number of countries. On May Day, hundreds of millions of workers world-wide review their achievements, their hard-won victories, their experiences, the memories handed down through generations; the traditions and pride in the historic role of the working class.

Marion Gaima Wins Battle Against Deportation

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"However grateful I am for myself, I realise that there are hundreds of others facing deportation who have also made their lives here, or who cannot go home for fear of persecution. I hope that my case has some kind of positive impact on the fate of others whose lives may be disrupted if they are forced to leave."

Ian Charlton, branch secretary of Hackney NALGO said on behalf of the branch that the decision was viewed as a victory for the entire membership. The Hackney NALGO branch drew upon its 3000-strong membership to support the activities of the campaign.

"Hackney is a multi-racial borough and deportations is a potentially very divisive issue that effects us all. Our union defends the right of all working people to live and work without fear of deportation, and will continue to support our members affected by present immigration laws."

The Marion Gaima Anti-Deportation Campaign will celebrate the Home Office decision with a Victory Party on May 5th, which will be held at Hackney Town Hall from 7.30pm. For more information and/or tickets, contact: Hackney NALGO, 985 7134.

HGV Drivers Campaign For Better Facilities

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It is these frustrations which led to the formation of our HGV Drivers Welfare Campaign. In conjunction with other HGV drivers and workers from Hackney trade Union Support Unit we aim to make this a major health and safety campaign within the TGWU and the road transport industry.

We have been visiting a number of South East sites and talking to drivers about their concerns. In addition we have been getting them to take away our leaflets, fill-in our health questionnaires and to sign our petitions.

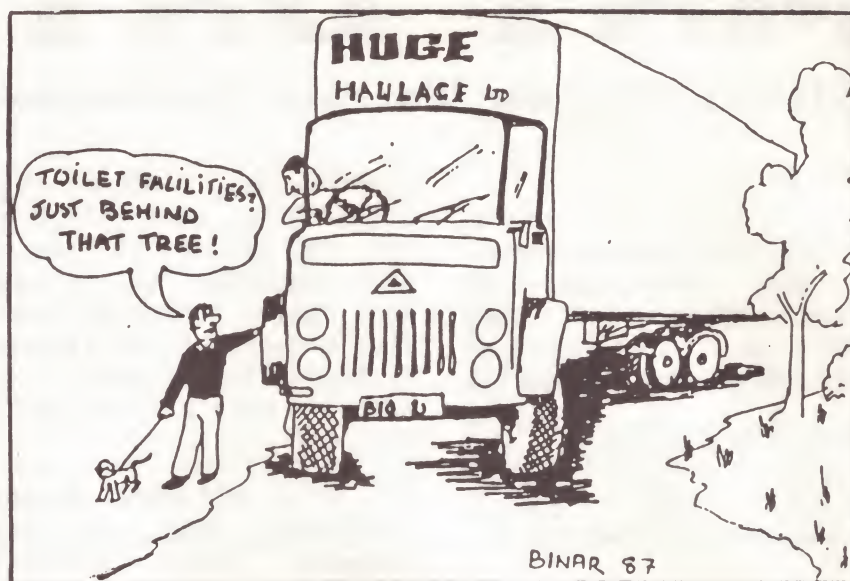
Support from MPs

We have also mailed information, using the TGWU mailing list, to Road Transport Commercial(RTC) stewards. TGWU sponsored MP's have also been written to and the 24 replies we received indicated a willingness to support our initiatives.

The current edition of the TGWU paper for drivers 'The Highway' gave considerable publicity to our campaign with a two page centre spread.

We have also written to all London Councils and recently met with a Lambeth Labour Councillor. We are seeking discussions with Hackney Council as there are no facilities in the borough for overnight parking, let alone facilities for hot meals or washing. There are not even any parking facilities with proper toilets!

The issue is not only important for drivers but also has implications for catering staff, pump attendants and other ancillary workers. In



Brian Maynard

addition it has implications for other road users and pedestrians as tired HGV drivers can create considerable road safety problems.

If you would like to know more about the campaign or how you can help, then contact George Sherman, via the support unit."



NUR Pledges Nicaragua Solidarity

The Rail Workers for Nicaragua campaign was launched at an open meeting of the NUR London Midland District Council on March 22nd.

It was recalled that NUR support for the people of Nicaragua and its freely elected Sandanista government was affirmed by a 1985 AGM decision which condemned the military interference by the United States.

NUR support was re-affirmed at last year's AGM. The union also endorsed the Central American Peace Agreement which seemed to offer the prospect of ending the Contras military activities against the Sandanista government.

"The need for material assistance is desperate", said Bro. Foster, "and so is the need for international solidarity. The NUR stands pledged to support these objectives in the cause of a free Nicaragua."

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The articles in HUN do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff or Policy Group.